

Richard Ples
Mount Vernon
LD 1009

to the Maine House Judiciary Committee
From: Richard J Ples
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Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to you today in strong support of LD 1009, a bill that presents an opportunity for fairness, rehabilitation, and respect for the constitutional rights of the people of Maine. This bill is about restoring dignity and rights to individuals who have served their time, paid their dues, and proven they are worthy of a second chance. It's about recognizing that once someone has been rehabilitated, they should have the right to regain their ability to protect themselves, their families, and participate fully in society.

We all understand the importance of holding individuals accountable for their actions, but we also know that punishment should not be a life sentence when it comes to restoring civil rights. After serving their sentences, those who meet the eligibility requirements deserve a pathway to reintegrate as fully participating citizens. LD 1009 provides a fair and structured process through the Department of Public Safety to ensure that only those who truly deserve restoration can reclaim their rights. It's not a free pass. It's a responsible, transparent process that recognizes the complexity of the human experience: people can change. By supporting this bill, we're saying that we believe in second chances, and we believe in redemption. We're telling Mainers that we won't punish them for life if they've proven they can turn their lives around.

The right to bear arms is enshrined in our Constitution. It's a fundamental American principle — one that should not be lost forever to someone who has demonstrated rehabilitation and who seeks to live as a responsible citizen. LD 1009 provides a reasonable framework for restoring those rights to individuals who've earned it, without compromising public safety. This isn't about opening the floodgates for everyone, nor is it about being soft on crime. This bill simply creates a thoughtful, fair process for those who have earned their place back in society to regain a right they never should have lost in the first place.

This bill supports the idea that rehabilitation works. It sends the message that we don't want to continue to marginalize people who have already served their time, done the work to better themselves, and shown that they can be responsible. The goal is not to punish for the rest of their lives but to encourage people to be their best selves and reintegrate into society in a positive way. LD 1009 aligns with Maine's values of fairness, second chances, and community strength. Those who meet the eligibility requirements should have the opportunity to restore their rights — as we all should have the ability to get back on our feet and rebuild our futures.

Rather than leaving people to fall through the cracks, this bill gives them the tools to re-enter society as responsible, law-abiding citizens. By restoring their rights, we're not just giving them back a privilege — we're acknowledging their value as members of our community. LD 1009 helps reinforce the principle that Maine is a place where people can come back, rise up, and rebuild their lives, without being forever defined by their past mistakes.

This bill provides a fair, transparent, and responsible pathway to restoring rights to those who have earned it. It ensures that the right to bear arms, like all civil rights, isn't something that should be taken away forever once someone has completed their sentence and proven they have turned their life around.

I urge you to vote YES on LD 1009. This is a step forward for fairness, for justice, and for the people of Maine who believe in redemption, responsibility, and a chance for a fresh start.

Respectfully,

Richard J ples
Mt Vernon, Maine